

# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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First, our competition. You were asked: 1. In which canonical story is Cardinal Tosca mentioned? (Everyone gave the correct answer: "Black Peter."); 2. Why was Holmes wasting his time in trying to warm his hands by the gasogene? (That's ambiguously worded, I'm afraid, but again everyone was right: a gasogene is a device for aerating water.); 3. What beside his stethoscope did Watson conceal in his top hat? This was the tie-breaker. The winners are (taran-tara!): 1. Vosper Arthur for his inspired suggestion "a miniature of brandy - Watson always seemed to be able to produce brandy at, shall I say, a drop of a hat!"; 2. Heather Stevens for her outrageously improbable notion that it was Watson's bull pup (so that's what became of it!); 3. A.N. Other (a pseudonym), who thinks that it was the accounts of all those cases of which Holmes said, "Now, keep this under your hat, Watson..." To the winners go the prizes, and to the Donkey Sanctuary goes a reasonably healthy cheque. Thanks to all for your entries.

Until recently there were four essential books for any serious student of the Whitechapel murders (Donald Rumbelow's *THE COMPLETE JACK THE RIPPER*, Colin Wilson & Robin Odell's *JACK THE RIPPER: SUMMING UP & VERDICT*, Paul Begg's *JACK THE RIPPER: THE UNCENSORED FACTS*, Alexander Kelly's *JACK THE RIPPER: A BIBLIOGRAPHY & REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE*); now we have another - *THE JACK THE RIPPER A TO Z*, by Paul Begg, Martin Fido & Keith Skinner (Headline, £16.95), in which are summarised all the relevant facts and theories, with detailed accounts of persons and events, real or conjectural. The research has been immense, and it's all presented with magnificent impartiality (even the authors' own books don't escape criticism: see the entry for *THE CRIMES, DETECTION & DEATH OF JACK THE RIPPER*). As Rumbelow says in his foreword: "I have no doubt that the mystery will be solved. With the amount of newly discovered material now available and the hope of more to come, this book guarantees it." A bold statement, and probably justified.

Multimedia Books have just published under their Prion imprint *THE WORLD OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* (£7.95), abridgements of *STUD*, *SIGN* & *HOUN*, adapted by Nigel Flynn & Richard Widdows. It's a big book, handsomely presented; more importantly, the adaptation is skilful, making for an admirable introduction to the stories for young readers. The stories are attractively illustrated with stills from the Australian cartoon films. I know that I've been very critical of these films, with their stilted animation and poor characterisation, but even though Holmes is shown as too smooth and handsome, and Watson too old and fat, the stills work very nicely as illustrations; the Hound is splendidly fearsome.

By the time this reaches you, *DOCTOR WATSON & THE INVISIBLE MAN* by Noel Downing will have been published (Ian Henry, £10.95). This remarkable adventure is set in 1907, ten years after the events chronicled by H.G. Wells; Watson is involved by his friend, the journalist Langdale Pike, in a search for the notebooks of the original "Invisible Man", and in a hunt for a murderer. On the way, they encounter the mystical writer Arthur Machen, enlist the reluctant help of Aleister Crowley (who throws new light on the secret of Griffin's invisibility) and uncover a plot that prefigures the Nazism of the 20s and 30s. It's an open secret that Noel Downing is actually the distinguished American Sherlockian (and authority on weird literature) Philip Shreffler; you would expect the book to be well-written and authoritative, and so it is (though I regret the occasional solecism, such as "As Anderson joined Pike and I..." Dear me, Mr Downing. Dear me!). It's a rattling good read, in which nothing is predictable.

Recently to hand are the latest issues of various magazines, journals and newsletters, each full of fascinating scholarly and entertaining material. *THE PETREL FLYER* vol. 3 no. 5 (The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia, Barbara Alder, 9-8311 Steveston Highway, Richmond, BC V7A 1M4, Canada); *THE ANGEL UNDERGROUND* vol. 1 no. 1 (The Avenging Angels, Ronald B. De Waal, 638 12th Avenue, Salt Lake City, UT 84103, USA); *UNDER THE ARCH* vol. 1 no. 2 (The Parallel Case of

St Louis, Joseph J. Eckrich, 7793 Keswick Place, St Louis, M) 63119, USA); THE FRANCO-MIDLAND HARDWARE COMPANY INTERIM REPORT 1991 (The Final Problem Contract Reviewed) (The Stock-Broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3RU); VARIETIES OF ASH vol. 1 no. 1 (S.E. Dahlinger, 758 Third Street, Secaucus, NJ 07094, USA); THE PRIORY SCHOLARS SCHOOL REPORT no. 7 (Mrs S. Gordon, 69 Kirkland Road, Braunstone, Leicester LE3 2JQ); THE SERPENTINE MUSE vol. 10 no. 1 (Evelyn A. Herzog, 360 West 21st Street, Apt 5A, New York, NY 10011, USA); and not least THE SHERLOCK HOLMES GAZETTE no. 3 (Theme Publications, 43 Bowleaze Coveaway, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6PL).

More for Ripperologists: just out is THE RIPPER & THE ROYALS by Melvyn Fairclough (Duckworth, £14.99); the foreword is by Joseph Sickert, who's been responsible for an awful amount of nonsense on the subject.

The Reichenbach Centenary Jug, based on a concept by the industrious Peter Horrocks, is now available in a strictly limited edition of 1000. It's a beautiful thing, as those who were lucky enough to attend the launch at the Sherlock Holmes Hotel will know. The jugs will be available at selected retail outlets, but you can reserve one by mail order (or request further details) from Studio Gallery Decorative Editions (50 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DP). They don't come cheap - the UK price is £95 - but they really are lovely.

Paula Kirby reminds me that an immense amount of Doyleana and Holmesiana from Rupert Books is available through Murder One, including new assignments from the Gasogene Press and Magico - and the lovely ILLUSTRATED INTERNATIONAL SHERLOCK HOLMES, previously available only in Japan and the USA. If you have any enquiries, please write to Paula at 59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE. On the subject of books, Malibu Graphics (5321 Sterling Center Drive, Westlake Village, CA 91361-4613, USA) have published several comic-strip adventures of Holmes & Watson: SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE by Edith Meiser & Frank Giacoia (\$17.95); from the same author and artist SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE AND OTHER STORIES (\$5.95) (these two draw on the original newspaper strips); and two by Martin Powell - SHERLOCK HOLMES: A CASE OF BLIND PEAR, pitting Holmes against the Invisible Man (\$9.95) and SHERLOCK HOLMES: SCARLET IN GASLIGHT, Holmes versus Dracula (\$9.95). These issues are fully authorised by the Conan Doyle Estate. Bill Blake asks me to remind all visitors to London (especially those who have to count their pennies - and who doesn't?) to spend a while in the second-hand and remainder bookshops of the Charing Cross Road before rushing off to pay full price for Holmes material.

Karizzma Enterprises (18 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG), who published the very collectable SHERLOCK HOLMES ALBUM for Granada TV in 1987, have also produced two equally cherishable series of postcards. The first, containing 16 cards, includes 3 stills from the Granada series (Brett & Burke, Brett & Hardwicke, Brett alone) and an eclectic selection of other illustrations: 3 different portraits of Gillette, the poster for the Rathbone HOUND, "A Reverie" from THE STRAND, the Holmes portrait from the Turf cigarette cards, the coloured Dorr Steele illustration to "The Empty House", and the cover pictures from the Murray 2/- editions of THE SIGN OF FOUR, THE ADVENTURES, THE MEMOIRS, THE RETURN and THE VALLEY OF FEAR. The second series contains 32 cards, being stills from each of the 32 adventures so far broadcast (some are interestingly unexpected shots); these come in an attractive cardboard "wallet", based on the cover design of THE STRAND MAGAZINE. The cards are on sale, individually or as sets, at the Granada Studios Tour, and the sets can be bought direct from Karizzma by post; the first (Old Style) costs £5.80, and the second (New Style) £11.10. Both prices include postage worldwide (the increased cost of postage overseas is offset by zero-rated VAT), and the New Style set includes the wallet. All payment in pounds sterling, please, and any customs or other duty is to be paid by the purchaser. There are special rates for bulk orders; please ask Karizzma for details.

On the subject of the Granada series, Michael Cox tells me that THE MASTER BLACKMAILER ("Charles Augustus Milverton") is now scheduled for broadcasting on ITV at 8 pm on the 2nd January. "Something to relieve the hangover?" he suggests. And Bert Coules adds that the Radio 4 series THE MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, with Clive Merrison & Michael Williams, will begin transmission on the afternoon of Wednesday the 8th January. It's going to be a good January, I think.

From the Solar Pons Society of London and (separately) from Geoffrey Stavert, I've received the latest catalogue of Radio Spirits Inc. (PO Box 2141, Schiller Park, Illinois 60176, USA). This is a listing of over 2000 radio recordings, mostly from the 30s, 40s and 50s, and mostly American. Sherlock Holmes is represented by a small selection from the Gielgud/Richardson series and the Hobbs/Shelley series, and by two sets of unabridged readings by "the famous voice actor Charles Fuller". Besides Holmes, there's treasure here for the lover of radio dramas CHARLIE McCARTHY, DRAGNET, GUNSMOKE, INNER SANCTUM, THE MERCURY THEATRE ON THE AIR (including Orson Welles' adaptation of Gillette's play), SUSPENSE... Basic cost of each one-hour tape is \$6, which is very reasonable.

Geoffrey also mentions that an American member and his wife will be staying in London at the St Giles Hotel (Bedford Avenue, WC1; phone 071-636 8616) from the 3rd to the 9th December. This is John E. Pforr of Timonium, Maryland. He'd like to meet any available British members for a drink and a chat. John is the co-author of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company Bond no. 001, SHERLOCK HOLMES & SCOTLAND YARD.

I've received a catalogue from Esdevium Games (6 Wellington Street, Aldershot, Hants. GU11 1DZ; phone 0252 311443), who stock a quite mind-boggling selection of board games and computer games (and probably other kinds), including the now-classic CONSULTING DETECTIVE and 221B BAKER STREET, together with the additional cases. There's also a Sherlock Holmes card game. Contact Esdevium for details.

John Brazzill tells of a "pub" in the suburbs of Barcelona, called The Sherlock Holmes ("I hear of Sherlock everywhere...") - "no obvious connection inside except for the fact it's like walking into a 19th century pub, all dark oak and a very English looking bar, but all Spanish beers!" He adds that LOS ARCHIVOS DE BAKER STREET have now reached the fourth volume, a Spanish translation of SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE MYSTERIOUS FRIEND OF OSCAR WILDE by Russell A. Brown. Like the earlier volumes, it's beautifully presented.

Isabel Mitchell has sent a copy of a letter from the Scotland Region of the Federation of Master Builders (540 Gorgie Road, Edinburgh; phone 031-337 3602), advising that the limited edition of Sherlock Holmes medals, commemorating the unveiling of the Holmes statue in Edinburgh, is now ready. Each medal costs the rather remarkable sum of £50, including postage. They can be ordered by sending a cheque to the above address.

Jim Clark (29 Langridge, Rhyl Street, London NW5 4LY) is looking to increase his collection of Sherlock Holmes on video. He's particularly keen to obtain any of the BBC episodes from the Douglas Wilmer and Peter Cushing series, and would be happy to swap copies of some of the rarities already in his possession, including all the Ronald Howard series, a number of the Eille Norwood films, Reginald Owen's A STUDY IN SCARLET, and the John Longden THE MAN WITH THE TWISTED LIP. (The mouth waters...)

Michael Cox has very kindly sent a copy of THE SHERLOCK HOLMES REVIEW, vol. 3 no. 2, containing a good long article by Michael himself about the making of the Granada TV series. The SHR is yet another very worthwhile journal, handsomely presented and full of interest. A four-issue subscription costs \$15 (overseas \$20) from PO Box 583, Zionsville, Indiana 46077, USA.

From John E. Stephenson and Syd Goldberg, news of a Chicago Sherlock Holmes Center, at the Harold Washington Library in downtown Chicago. The Center was opened officially on the 9th November; Peter Blau was a guest speaker, and anything Peter lends his presence to can't be bad.

The Conan Doyle (Crowborough) Establishment will unveil a memorial to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Crowborough on Saturday the 23rd May 1992. This will be a momentous occasion - for one thing, at last Sir Arthur is being properly honoured for himself and not just for Sherlock Holmes. If you'd like full details, please contact the Establishment's Media Liaison Officer, Philip Weller, at 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU.

John Ruyle (521 Vincente Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94707) is offering a strictly limited edition of just 76 copies of THE BULL PUP. "This slim collection contains 27 remarkable paraphrastic quartets, and is capped by a short poem by Holmes himself, culled from the pages of STUD

with true Canonical assiduity." 50 copies are numbered and hand-sewn in wraps at \$15, and 26 - numbered A-Z - are hardbound and signed by John; these cost \$35.

The Blessed Ev Herzog sends advance information on the gallivantings in New York over the weekend of the 10th/11th January. To start things in style, the Old Soldiers of Baker Street will hold an Aunt Clara Singalong for those at a loose end on Thursday the 9th. This will be at O'Lunney's Saloon & Restaurant, 12 West 44th Street, from 8 pm. Sherlockians are invited to wine and dine from a moderately priced menu, and raise their voices in traditional and unconventional folksong, led by Hugh O'Lunney's resident folk-singer. Bring your favourite song-sheets. No advance payment is required, but it's not a large establishment, and a cheque for \$10 per person will reserve your table (and will be deducted from your bill). Send cheques to Mr O'Lunney at 12 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036, USA - and remember to explain what it's for!

The Martha Hudson Breakfast will take place from 8.30 am in the Oak Room of the Algonquin Hotel. The cost is \$15, and admission is by ticket only. To reserve your place, send a cheque (payable to The Baker Street Irregulars) to The Stetaks, 15529 Diagonal Road, La Grange, Ohio 44050, USA. On the Saturday, the Baker Street Irregulars will host the usual dealers' room at the Algonquin, open to the public from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm. For details, contact Ray Betzner, 2906 Richard Place South, Williamsburg, VA 23185, USA. And the annual reception for all Sherlockians and their friends will be held at 24 Fifth Avenue from 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm that same day. Tickets are available at \$30 per person from Robert E. Thomalen, 69 Glen Road, Eastchester, NY 10709, USA. Please make cheques payable to the Baker Street Irregulars.

The evening of Friday the 10th, of course, sees both the Baker Street Irregulars' annual dinner and the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes' annual dinner. The ASH have, I think, always - sensibly - welcomed men; for the first time the BSIs will welcome a privileged few women, in addition to the fully-invested Irregularesses. Another taboo smashed! That same evening, of course, also sees our own Society's 40th annual dinner, held in the fitting fin-de-siecle surroundings of the Langham Hotel.

From Peter Blau: SHERLOCK HOLMES ON THE ROOF OF THE WORLD: OR THE ADVENTURE 10F THE WAYFARING GOD, by Thomas Kent Miller (Rosemill House, Box 7692, Redlands, CA 92375, USA) is the exploits of Leo Vincey and Horace Holly (from Rider Haggard's SHE) in Lhasa in 1891, where they encounter a Norwegian explorer named Sigerson... The book costs \$4.50, or \$6 postpaid from the publishers. It's also available from the Rupert Books stock at Murder One.

Two Sherlockian wall calendars for 1992, showing dates taken from Baring-Gould's ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES, have been announced. One, from Mark Alberstat (6258 Payzant Avenue, Halifax, NS B3H 2B1, Canada) has Paget illustrations; this is US \$10 postpaid. The other, from Brian & Charlotte Erickson (1029 Judson Drive, Mountain View, CA 94040, USA) has new photographs of the 221B room at the Holiday Inn in San Francisco; this is \$15 postpaid.

The third volume in the BSI Archival Series should be available now. This is IRREGULAR RECORDS OF THE EARLY FORTIES, edited by Jon L. Lellenberg (Fordham University Press; \$18.95).

Following the first two films in their series THE GOLDEN YEARS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, with Christopher Lee & Patrick Macnee (when are we going to see these in Britain?), Harmony Gold (it still sounds like a brand of margarine) and Klondike Films are now shooting THE LOST WORLD and RETURN TO THE LOST WORLD, with John Rhys Davies as Challenger & David Warner as Summerlee. Admirable casting!

This will be the last DM of 1991, so I'll take the opportunity to wish you all

THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON!

