

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

ROGER JOHNSON, 210 RAINSFORD ROAD, CHELMSFORD CM1 2PD

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The fourth of Jeremy Paul's scripts for Granada's Sherlock Holmes TV series has just been published by Ian Henry (Ian Henry Publications Ltd, 20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) at £5.45; this is THE MUSGRAVE RITUAL. Like the others (THE SPECKLED BAND, THE NAVAL TREATY, THOR BRIDGE), it's attractively presented, nicely illustrated, and comes with an informative introduction by the author. Who would have believed that the ingenious touch of the oak-tree weather-vane arose from sheer chance? (The Northern Musgraves' summer outing on July 4th will be to Baddesley Clinton near Warwick, which served admirably as Hurlstone in the play.)

The first thing to say about SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: INTERVIEWS AND RECOLLECTIONS, edited by Harold Orel (Macmillan) is that it contains much fascinating and valuable material. The second thing is that at £45 it's extraordinarily expensive. The third, that such a handsomely and expensively produced book should have been completely free of editorial errors. One can perhaps overlook such carelessness as "John L. Lellenberg" and "THE QUESTION FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES" (both p. 12), but why is Conan Doyle's first wife Louise referred to consistently as "Louisa"? On p. 170 we're told that "Macdonald Hastings, the last editor... died unexpectedly at the early age of forty-seven"; Mr Hastings was well into his 70s when he was Guest of Honour at our Society's annual dinner in 1977. Oddest of all is the statement on p. xvi: "Two tragedies coming close to the end of the Great War - the death of Arthur's brother Innes, and the death of Alleyne Kingsley, the Doyles' beloved son - broke into their serenity;" (i.e. that of Arthur and Jean, nee Leckie - R.J.) "but they recovered, and derived comfort from their five surviving children, a growing circle of grandchildren, and their fine home Windlesham in Crowborough, Sussex." After Kingsley's death, four children remained, not five - Mary, Denis, Adrian and Jean - and there were no grandchildren. The clumsy wording implies that Kingsley and Mary were the children of Arthur and Jean, whereas of course they were the children of Arthur and Louise. Professor Orel has collected together so many extraordinarily interesting accounts by contemporaries of ACD's life and work, mostly inaccessible to the average reader, that it's a shame such a worthwhile endeavour should be marred by such shoddy editorial writing. Do by all means order the book from your local library - there should be copies in all public library authorities, but purchase is likely to be beyond the reach of all but the rich.

I trust that those planning to attend the Society's weekend expedition to Dartmoor in June have already ordered their copies of the official handbook HOUND AND HORSE, edited by Shirley Purves, but I'd like to remind others that the book will have a relevance far beyond this one event. Like its predecessors (THE LIGHT IS DARK ENOUGH and THE TRI-METALLIC QUESTION) it is a collection of essays on specific canonical adventures, beautifully presented and handsomely illustrated. Last year's book contained some revelations about the Winchester aspect of "Silver Blaze"; this year's covers the equally contentious Dartmoor end of the story - and then there's THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES! HOUND AND HORSE may be ordered from Shirley Purves (Heron's Brook, Doddiscombsleigh, Exeter EX6 7RE) at £10 or \$18 the copy. For overseas delivery, add the following postal charges: Europe £1.50 or \$2.70; USA & Canada £4.50 or \$8.10; Australia & far east £5 or \$9. Cheques should be payable to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London and should be a) in Sterling drawn on a UK bank, b) in US dollars drawn on a US bank, or c) in Eurocheques drawn in Sterling on a European bank.

In reviewing the new edition of Philip Weller's THE DARTMOOR OF 'THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES' in DM 119, I mentioned that "the author has taken the opportunity to correct a few errors of earlier scholars that had found their way into the first edition." I should have made it clear that I was paraphrasing from Sherlock Publications' covering

letter, and that I myself am unaware of such errors. On a similar tack, despite the information quoted innocently from Whitaker's "Books In Print", I'm assured by Christopher Roden that the forthcoming THE LIFE & TIMES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (Studio Editions, £12.95) is not a collaboration, but is solely the work of Philip Weller.

On June 23rd Braveworld will release the two long-awaited Harmony Gold films to video rental shops. SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE LEADING LADY and SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE INCIDENT AT VICTORIA FALLS are clever, sometimes witty, characterful and opulent adventures set in the early years of this century. The writers are H.R.F. Keating and Bob Shayne, while the executive producer is Harry Alan Towers, the brains behind the famous radio plays with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson. It will be quite a while before you'll be able to buy copies of these 3-hour films, but thanks to Braveworld you now have the chance to win them. Braveworld has kindly donated five sets to be awarded as prizes in a special quiz. All you have to do is answer the following four questions, and send your answers to me at the DM address by the 30th June. The first five correct answers drawn from the hat on that day will each win copies of both films.

1. Christopher Lee plays Sherlock Holmes; in what other film did he play Holmes, and who played his Watson then?
2. Patrick Macnee plays Dr Watson. In what other film did he play Watson, and who played his Holmes then?
3. Christopher Lee has played two other canonical characters - which ones, and in which films?
4. In THE INCIDENT AT VICTORIA FALLS Jenny Seagrove plays Lillie Langtry and Joss Ackland plays Edward VII; which characters did they play in the Granada TV series?

Due from Allborough Publishing on the 30th July in their Allborough Collector's Series is LITERARY ENTHUSIASMS OF SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: TRUE BOOKS AND TRUE MEN (£9.50), a new edition of THROUGH THE MAGIC DOOR. Recently out in paperback from VGSF is Ian Watson's collection STALIN'S TEARDROPS, which contains a bizarre SH/SF pastiche "The Case of the Glass Slipper" (£3.99).

Seen recently in a bookshop in Chancery Lane (we think it was The Law Society Bookshop & Lending Library): a pottery figurine of Holmes, about 8" high. No price tag, just a note that it was for sale. The Bookshop Inc. (400 West Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, NC 27516, USA) has issued an interesting catalogue of detective fiction and true crime.

The Irregular Special Railway Company is a new branch office of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, whose initial aim is a) to correlate information from the various Sherlock Holmes societies and inform members of any Holmesian activities with a railway flavour/connection taking place; b) to organise its own outings; c) to promote happiness in the pursuit of a) and b)! The Station Master is Antony J. Richards (163 Marine Parade, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2RB).

Worthwhile periodicals received lately include THE BAKER STREET JOURNAL vol. 42 no. 1 Philip A. Shreffler, 11333 Big Bend Boulevard, St Louis, MO 63122, USA); THE SERPENTINE MUSE vol. 10 no. 3 (Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street, Apt 5A, New York, NY 10011, USA); THE MIDNIGHT OIL winter 1992 (Cate Pfeifer, 746 West Main Street, Apt 201, Madison, WI 53715, USA); THE ANGEL UNDERGROUND vol. 2 no. 2 (Ronald B. De Waal, 638 12th Avenue, Salt Lake City, UT 84103, USA); THE BAKER STREET DISPATCH vol. 2 no. 3 (Thomas Biblewski, PO Box 5503, Toledo, Ohio 43613, USA); THE BAKER STREET PILLAR BOX no. 10 and THE FMHC ANNUAL REPORT 1992: THE WISTERIA LODGE CONTRACT (The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hampshire PO14 3RU); THE CALL OF THE HUNT (John E. Stephenson, 535 West Easter Place, Littleton, Colorado 80120, USA); BAKER STREET MISCELLANEA no. 67 (Box 225, Winnetka, IL 60093, USA).

