

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London
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Sherlock Holmes in the Midlands by Dr Paul Lester (Brewin Books, Doric House, Church Street, Studley, Warwickshire B80 7LG; £9.95) is physically an immense improvement on Dr Lester's briefer, self-published booklet **Sherlock Holmes in Birmingham**: it's an attractively presented paperback, nicely printed and illustrated. The author has revised some of the material from the earlier brochure and greatly expanded on the rest, to take in a broad swath from Herefordshire to Derbyshire. The book's title tells the truth, but not the whole truth, since Dr Lester covers the exploits not only of Sherlock Holmes but of Arthur Conan Doyle in this particular part of the country - and it's an area that ACD knew from his early days with a practice in Aston, returning to on occasion (and the occasion was sometimes notable, as with the Edalji case). Dr Lester has done his research and is an engaging writer. Also, he's scrupulous in acknowledging the work of previous scholars, whether or not he agrees with them. This is a book of much more worth than its discreet appearance might suggest. Highly recommended.

Something new & something old last month from Ian Henry Publications Ltd (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) . The new is **Sherlock Holmes and the Somerset Hunt** by Rosemary Michaud (£11.95), a complex and involving tale of crime, passion & frailty. Holmes and Watson are called down to the west country to investigate a suspicious riding accident, and find themselves entangled in something much deeper. I don't know Rosemary Michaud, but she has a nice way with words, and she clearly knows her Sherlock Holmes. The old, back in print after far too long, is **The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes** by Michael & Mollie Hardwick, based on Billy Wilder's film (£11.95). Exciting, witty, sad, clever, it's one of those very rare books-of-the-film that can stand on their own merits - as you'd expect from the Hardwicks. A minor classic of Holmesian pastiche. Ian has an ambition to publish a limited edition of Eille Norwood's play **The Return of Sherlock Holmes**, which ran successfully in the West End in 1923. He has the copyright-holders' permission, but is rather frustrated by the fact that the manuscript is missing. Norwood's son-in-law Ernest Dudley recalls depositing it, along with a number of cast photographs, in the care of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London in the early 1950s - but no-one seems to have seen it since! Ian has established that it is "quite fat and bound in black". He would be very grateful for any help. More certain plans are for Ian Henry to publish in the autumn a new Holmes chronology by John Hall and another pastiche novel; he's also contracted for the next Mycroft Holmes novel by Glenn Petrie. Ian adds the information that the Canadian publishers Simon & Pierre, who put out some first-rate studies by Chris Redmond among others, are now distributed in the USA and Australia by Empire Publishing, PO Box 1132, Studio City, California 91614.

New from the versatile and industrious Charles Hall (12 Paisley Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 7JW) is a white metal tableau, in low relief, 75mm tall (about 3V), of Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, and the Fairies. The seated figure of Conan Doyle looks like that in Bernard

Partridge's famous cartoon, in which the author is shackled willy-nilly to his great creation; here the detective stands intently behind his creator, brooding over him, while the fairies play. It's a striking piece, with a more sombre feel to it than in Charles' caricature figures, and cheap at £6.75 including postage within the UK. About now Charles will have issued a medal, die-struck in Edinburgh, bearing on the one face a portrait of Sir Arthur and on the other a picture of the Sherlock Holmes statue in Picardy Place (£12.50 including postage within the UK). Fraser Smyth (32 Cirencester Road, Tetbury, Gloucestershire GL8 8EY) has a small number left of his attractive badges commemorating 40 years of our Society; they're available to members on receipt of a strong small stamped & self-addressed envelope. Stephen F. Rosenberg (3 Greenwood Place, Ste 307, Pikesville, MD 21208, USA) is offering an attractive black & gold plastic lapel pin - a profile of guess who - for \$3.50 (+ 50C postage for each pin ordered).

There's a new list of Holmesiana from Neal Smith's "Black Orchid Books" (Unit 8, Castle Court, Castle Street, Shrewsbury SY1 2BG), and a bigger one with more expensive material from Gravesend Books (Box 235, Pocono Pines, PA 18350, USA). Bill Blake reminds me that **The Annotated Sherlock Holmes**, whose production was William Baring-Gould's magnum opus, is now available in a single volume from the Outlet Book Co. at an astonishingly cheap \$29.99 (Murder One in Charing Cross Road has it at £25, which is still pretty good); if you don't have a copy, buy one as soon as you can - it's a must.

More new books. Dr Benton Wood of the Pleasant Places of Florida (PO Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA) has brought out a new edition of his standard guide to the stamps and coins of Sherlock Holmes, **Philatelic & Numismatic Holmes** (\$5.00), and **Mrs Hudson's Handbook of Sherlockian Cookery & Holmesian Needlepoint** by Joan S. Wood (\$7.50) - for airmail postage overseas, add \$2.00 to your order; checks payable to Benton Wood, please. There's a set of children's books out in the USA by one Robert Quackenbush, being the exploits of Sherlock Chick; I know no more. One I do want to know more about is **Sherlock Holmes: The Rathbone Casebook** by Bruce Eden, published last year by Windsong of Virginia at \$14.95 (for a start, I'd like to see if there's anything I missed when writing **Ready When You Are, Mr Rathbone**, copies of which may still be available from the Northern Musgraves, c/o David Stuart Davies at Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER for £6 or \$12.00).

George Welch passes on the good news that in September 1994, the GPO (or whatever our postal service calls itself these days) will issue a set of stamps commemorating - wait for it - Sherlock Holmes. Expect a very great deal of interest. Kevin Jacklin tells me of a couple of new Sherlock Holmes games. The German role-playing game **Private Eye** has reached a second edition, "a well-produced 128 page A4 book, plus a booklet of interesting Victorian maps and plans"; there's now a 4th adventure pack for the game. The game (all in German, incidentally) is available for £10 from B&B Productions, c/o Thilo Bayer, Postfach 12, 7129 Talheim, Germany. **The Lost Files of Sherlock Holmes** (Electronic Arts; £40) is for the personal computer buff; this game has already been well received in the USA, and Kevin himself calls it "marvellous".

Bert Coules brings news of more Holmes on the radios BBC Radio 5 has produced a series of pastiche adventures called **The Unopened Casebook of Sherlock Holmes**, written by John Taylor, produced by Peter Hutchings, and starring Simon Callow (Holmes in the recent Radio 4 production of

The Seven-per-Cent Solution) and Nicky Henson as Holmes & Watson. Look out for the first one on or about Sunday the 14th February - the day on which Radio 4 will repeat **The Gloria Scott**. (*While we're on the subject of radio, I missed last Thursday's play in the **Fear On Four** series - "Hearing Is Believing"; if anyone can help me out with a recording, I'll be extremely grateful.*) Michael Cox passes on a caveat; Sony have just issued a CD of Cole Porter's 1958 TV musical **Aladdin**, in which Basil Rathbone played the Emperor of China, who has just one song - but on the recording the song is sung by one George Hall, even though sleeve and disc credit Rathbone! Beware!

John Addy (23, East Street, Lightcliffe, Halifax HX3 8TU) kindly sent a copy of an article from **The Independent** of the 10th January about the Andaman Islanders; he can provide copies to other interested people. The NASA scientist Bradley Schaefer has made international news with his identification - published this month in a British astronomical magazine (does anyone know which one?) - of Moriarty and Moran as Simon Newcomb and Col. Alfred Drayson. **The Scotsman** for the 29th December had a pleasant piece about Conan Doyle's schooldays at Feldkirch in Austria.

The production of Paul Giovanni's **The Crucifer of Blood** by Mobil Touring Theatre, mentioned in the last DM will actually be on tour from the 10th of this month. 10-13 February at Theatre Royal, Norwich; 16-20 February at Theatre Royal, Glasgow; 22-27 February at Civic Theatre, Darlington; 2-6 March at Alhambra, Bradford; 9-13 March at Orchard Theatre, Dartford; 16-20 March at Wimbledon Theatre; 23-27 March at Wycombe Swan, High Wycombe; 30 March - 3 April at Grand Theatre, Blackpool; 6-10 April at Grand Theatre, Belfast; 13-17 April at His Majesty's Theatre, Aberdeen; 20-24 at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry; 26 April - 1 May at Theatre Royal, Nottingham; 4-8 May at Opera House, York; 11-15 May at Theatre Royal, Bath. (Thanks to Geoffrey Stavert and John Fremantle for keeping me posted on this one.)

On the weekend of the 13th-14th March in Dayton, Ohio, will be held the **12th Annual Dayton Sherlock Holmes/Conan Doyle Symposium**. There may still be places available; contact Al Rodin, 3041 Maginn Drive, Beavercreek, OH 45434, USA (phone 513 429-2904). The Norwegian Explorers will host a conference over the weekend of the 11th, 12th & 13th June at the Holiday Inn Metrodome in Minneapolis, Minnesota, under the title **Sherlock Holmes' Victorian Criminal Classes**; for information contact Norwegian Explorers Conference 93, 466 O.M. Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, 309 19th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA (phone 612 624-3855).

The Arthur Conan Doyle Society has a limited stock of the six issues of its journal **ACD** (1989 - 1992) available for purchase by member or non-members. The cost of issues 1 - 5 is £6 per copy, post-paid; issue 6 is £10 per copy, post-paid. Enquiries and orders to the society at Ashcroft, 2 Abbotsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester SH4 0JG (phone 0244 545210). Steven Emmons (70A Greenwich Avenue, New York, NY 10011, USA) exhibited his Holmesian art over the BSI/ASH Sherlock Holmes birthday weekend in January, to considerable acclaim. Write to him for information about his very striking pictures.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. J. J.', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.