

# THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

The Newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London

*Roger Johnson, Mole End, 41 Sandford Road, Chelmsford CM2 6DE*

no. 141 7th June 1994

Well, the "Back to Baker Street" festival is over. Thanks to the hard work of a lot of dedicated people, it was a roaring success. It was grand to meet old friends again, and to make new friends as well. If you weren't able to be in London, or even if you were, you can still participate by buying a copy of the book **Back to Baker Street**, edited by Jean and me for the Society. Its 100 packed pages contain: an account of the Society's origins by Tony & Freda Howlett; two seminal essays on Baker Street by Bernard Davies; a survey of Conan Doyle's London by Richard Lancelyn Green; glances at Holmes' London by Douglas Warren, David Stuart Davies, Anna Smyth and Roger Matthews; plus stimulating articles on various London topics by Heather Owen, Val Andrews, Catherine Cooke, John Warwick Montgomery, Tony Medawar, Derek Hinrich, Grant Eustace, Shirley Purves, Stephen Farrell, Simon Smyth, John Bennett Shaw, James Cuthbertson, Antony J. Richards, Carol Whitlam, Jon L. Lellenberg, Tim Owen and the editors; as well as some super new illustrations by Jean-Pierre Cagnat and Jeff Decker; and our special treat - a humorous piece by Stephen Fry (yes, the Stephen Fry, as in **Jeeves & Wooster** and **A Bit of Fry & Laurie**). All this for only £10.00! Or, to be exact, the cost including postage is: UK £11.50; Europe £12.50; North America US\$21.50; rest of world £14.50 or equivalent. Send your order to Mrs Lynne Godden, Apple Tree Cottage, Smarden, Kent TN27 8QE, and make cheques payable to The Sherlock Holmes Society of London. HURRY, WHILE STOCKS LAST!

In DM 140 I reviewed **The Sherlock Holmes Notebook** and **The Sherlock Holmes Book of Quotations** (Robert Frederick Ltd, Downwood, Claverton Down Road, Bath BA2 6DT). Unknowingly, I quoted the prices for slightly flawed copies, which the publishers have released to remainder book-shops. The retail prices for perfect copies are £4.99 for the **Notebook** and £2.99 for each variant of the **Book of Quotations**. Ming Books UK (110 Gloucester Avenue, London NW1 8JA) have them at these prices, plus postage, and Ming Books US (1801 J.F.K. Boulevard #1404, Philadelphia, PA 19103, USA) have them at \$7.50 and \$4.49 respectively, again plus postage. Ming also offer an **Address Book**, a **Birthday Book** and a **Journal** in similar format to the **Notebook**.

Ian Henry Publications Ltd (20 Park Drive, Romford RM1 4LH) have two new Holmesian books out this month. **The Singular Case of the Duplicate Holmes** by Jan Walker (£12.99) is a well-written and jolly mystery in which the great detective must run to earth a rather unpleasant impostor and clear his own good name. Jan Walker has a clever imagination, and doesn't overdo the Victorian flourishes, so that the writing carries conviction (Conan Doyle was never ornate or precious). According to Austin Mitchelson's **The Baker Street Irregular: The Unauthorised Biography of Sherlock Holmes** (£16.99; a joint publication with Players Press Inc., PO Box 1132, Studio City, CA 91614-0132, USA) Holmes didn't have much of a good name anyway. The author has done a very clever debunking job, "proving" Holmes to have been both malicious and incompetent, swindling his clients, airily breaking the law for no good reason, committing appalling crimes under the influence of cocaine, murdering a harmless mathematician... And so it goes

on. The idea isn't new, of course. In an article in **The Listener** over 30 years ago, L.W. Bailey "proved" that Holmes was Jack the Ripper, and Michael Dibdin elaborated on that theme in his controversial novel **The Last Sherlock Holmes Story**. Mr Mitchelson presents us with a Holmes who is not wholly flawed - a point in his favour. Where he falls down, I think, is in his heavy reliance on Baring-Gould's highly suspect "biography" **Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street**. Purists will probably hate this book; I enjoyed it.

I don't know what the purists will make of **Sherlock Holmes: The Major Stories with Contemporary Critical Essays**, edited by John A. Hodgson (Bedford Books of St Martin's Press, 29 Winchester Street, Boston, MA 02116; distributed outside North America by The Macmillan Press Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hants. RG21 2XS; £6.99) as it refuses to play our game at all. Indeed, the editor quotes with approval the description of our "higher criticism" as "the most tedious pseudo-scholarship in the history of letters". (When you issue that sort of challenge, you should ensure that you don't commit errors like naming Conan Doyle's third son Malcolm Adrian instead of Adrian Malcolm, or nicknaming the young Jean Conan Doyle "Dilly" instead of "Billy".) Actually, it's good to be reminded that Sherlock Holmes has a place in literature as well as in life, though as with much modern lit-crit ("contemporary" here means with us, not with the stories) I find some of these essays pretentious and some impenetrable (I don't remember deconstructing texts when I was at university), but there's also good, sound stuff here, particularly in Audrey Jaffa's indication of the debt "The Man with the Twisted Lip" owes to Mayhew's **London Labour and the London Poor**. The stories are well chosen, and the cost of this attractively presented 452-page paperback is very reasonable. Buy it, and find out how non-Holmesian scholars view the Holmes saga.

A.A. Lumb's brief pastiche **Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Featherstone Policeman** (Briton Press, 21 Albert Street, Featherstone, Pontefract, West Yorkshire WF7 5RX; £1.50 - please make cheques payable to A. Lumb) brings Holmes into a mining dispute in 1893, where he uncovers a political conspiracy. Mr Lumb has recently completed another Holmes story, which he intends to publish shortly. The Arthur Conan Doyle Society (Ashcroft, 2 Abbottsford Drive, Penyffordd, Chester CH4 0JG) has published a 20-page, card-covered booklet, **Conan Doyle of Wimpole Street**, containing a lengthy article by Richard Lancelyn Green detailing the previous attempts to have a plaque to ACD sited at 2 Devonshire Place and the discovery that his consulting-room was actually at 2 Upper Wimpole Street, a short introduction by Christopher and Barbara Roden, an afterword by Tony Howlett, pictures by Catherine Cooke and a map of the area. Price including postage is: UK £4.00; rest of world US\$7.00/C\$9.00 (cheques can be accepted in all three currencies, payable to the society).

**The Oxford Sherlock Holmes** is currently available from BCA Book Clubs at £49.95 instead of £69.95. Dr Benton Wood, the Chaplain to the BSI, has compiled and published a 52-page spiral-bound book called **Who's Where: A Handy Reference Guide to Persons in the Holmesian Canon, Listed by Adventure** (P.O. Box 740, Ellenton, FL 34222, USA; \$6.50; add \$1.50 for postage overseas). Gravesend Books' new catalogue (Box 235, Pocono Pines, PA 18350, USA) is full of Sherlockian goodies, as always. That excellent magazine CADS has reached its 23rd issue; this one concentrates on Napoleon in crime & detective stories (G.H. Bradley, 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA). The Scarecrow Press (Box 4167, Metuchen, NJ 08840, USA) has published **Sherlock Holmes: Screen and Sound Guide** by

Gordon E. Kelley, at \$37.50. Peter Blau calls it "splendid".

CSA Telltapes Ltd (101 Chamberlayne Road, London NW10 3ND) has issued **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes episode 2**, a new double cassette on which Edward Hardwicke reads "The Cardboard Box", "The Man with the Twisted Lip" and "The Bruce-Partington Plans" (TTDMC 436; cost about £7.99). The BBC Radio Collection (BBC Enterprises Ltd, Woodlands, 80 Wood Lane, London W12 OTT) has now released **The Return of Sherlock Holmes** volumes 1, 2 & 3 (ZBBC 1495, ZBBC 1496, ZBBC 1497; c. £7.99 each), containing the first twelve cases from the Radio 4 series. If you buy them before the end of July, you can send off for the 13th tale, "The Second Stain"; after that, it will be included on volume 3 of **The Memoirs**. (They should by now have completed recording the first half of **The Casebook** for broadcast later.) The part-work series "Talking Classics" has reached #7: **The Hound of the Baskervilles** read by Peter Egan in an abridged edition. £3.99 gets you a double cassette or CD plus background information in a 16-page colour magazine. It's currently widely available in newsagents, but if you miss it you can order it from Back Issues Dept, TALKING CLASSICS, Orbis Publishing Ltd, Kings Cliffe, Peterborough PE8 6YP (0780 470126).

**The Daily Telegraph** for the 3rd May had an affectionate obituary of Patsy Dalton, with a photo by Tony Marshall from last year's French jaunt. Thanks to Stephen Farrell, I have a number of photocopies - let me know if you'd like one. An unexpected result was that Patsy featured in **The Oldie**, in "The Obituary Game" - she'd have loved that.

On Saturday next **The Northern Musgraves'** multi-society meeting "Investigating the Footsteps of a Gigantic Hound" will take place at Granada Studios. Douglas Wilmer will be the special guest at their Sherlockian Weekend, "The Neglected Cases", on the 8th/9th October at the Victoria & Albert Hotel, Manchester. Details from Kathryn White, 149 Myrtle Terrace, Cross Roads, Keighley, West Yorks. BD22 9AJ. **The Poor Folk Upon the Moors** will hold a buffet lunch, auction and entertainment on Saturday the 18th June at "The Nobody Inn", Doddiscombsleigh, Devon. A special Baskerville Bitter has been brewed for the occasion by Branscombe's. There may still be places available. Contact Vosper Arthur, Spynishlake, Doddiscombsleigh, Exeter EX6 7PR. **The East Anglian Dancing Men (and Women)** plan a weekend exploration of "Gloria Scott" country in Norfolk over the 18th/19th June. Details from Geoff Budd, c/o The Accommodation & Conference Office, University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ. **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company's** Annual Dinner will be held in Birmingham on the 25th June, following an afternoon excursion to Canonical and Conanical sites in the area. Contact The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU. The 6th Annual Holmesian Games will be hosted in Vancouver by **The Stormy Petrels of British Columbia** on the 17th/18th September. As well as classic events like Dr Watson's Remedy Relay and Mrs Hudson's Bake-Off, there's the All-Canon Quiz, and the Victorian Dinner with entertainment. Sunday morning is given over to The Great Debate between the United States of America and the Rest of the World on the motion That Sherlock Holmes Is the Rudest Man Who Ever Lived. Contact International Holmesian Games Committee, c/o Elsa Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada.

The English Teddy Bear Company (8 Abbey Churchyard, Bath BA1 1LY; phone 0225 311414) has shops at 153 Regent Street, London, 84 High Street, Oxford, 1 King's Parade, Cambridge, and 4 St Peter's Street, Canterbury. You can buy various items for a Teddy Bear's wardrobe, including a Sherlock Holmes outfit (£14.99). Cathy Childs (Sherlock & Co. Ltd, 1510

Lake Drive/Grand Island, FL 32735, USA) is an artist and writer specialising in Sherlock Holmes. She's produced numerous portraits of Brett, Burke & Hardwicke in character, along with others from the Granada series, plus cartoons, T-shirts, bookmarks and a whole range of collectibles. Her own favourite item is her 300-page book of cartoons **The Bits Watson Doesn't Tell Us** (\$19.95/£18.15 post paid). Her work has been well featured in **The Sherlock Holmes Gazette**, and can be seen at the Granada Studios Tour and elsewhere.

St Bartholomew's Hospital (West Smithfield, London EC1A 7BE), whose Canonical credentials are impeccable, is still in real danger of being closed down by a lunatic Minister of Health. You can support Bart's by buying a First Day Cover with the Royal Mail's Holmes stamps; £5.00 or £6.00 signed by Jeremy Brett (plus postage). Kevin Jacklin tells me of Holmes on CD-ROM: **The Illustrated Sherlock Holmes** has the complete text plus colour illustrations and atmospheric music (c. £21.00); **Sherlock Holmes on Disc** has the complete illustrated text with Conan Doyle's Medical Casebook (c. £30.00). Try contacting Unica Ltd (061-429 0241) for more information. "Murder On The Menu" will stage "a murder hunt with a difference" in the Victorian splendour of Dyffryn House & Gardens (St Nicholas, Cardiff CF5 5SU) over the weekend of the 28th/29th/30th October. Details from the Events Co-ordinator, Nicola Walby, at Dyffryn House (phone 0222 593328).

Jennie C. Paton (206 Loblolly Lane, Statesboro, GA 30458, USA) provides a service to US Sherlockians by loaning video and audio recordings. She's recently added Granada's **Memoirs** series and the new laser-disc recording of **The Private Life**, which has restored some of the missing scenes. (\*Can anyone lend a tape of Granada's **The Dying Detective** on VHS standard-play, please? Jennie's also after a full recording of **The Four Oaks Mystery**.) The Folio Society has now issued **Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels** in a boxed set, illustrated by Francis Mosley and introduced by Michael Cox. In 1978 Fred Saberhagen brought the sleuth and the vampire together in **The Holmes-Dracula File**; they're back again in **Seance for a Vampire** (Tor Books; \$21.95). Robert C. Hess (559 Potter Boulevard, Brightwaters, NY 11718, USA) has a new list of Sherlockiana for sale. Thomas M. Boykoff (222 Randolph Drive, #303, Madison, WI 53717, USA) is looking for someone to trade British stamps for American ones (or for sports collectors' cards).

Recent periodicals of interest: **The ACD Birthday Newsletter** no. 1, in **A Conan Doyle Research File** (The Conan Doyle [Crowborough] Establishment, "The Conan Doyle Room", The Cross Hotel, Crowborough, East Sussex) (\*associate membership is available for a £10.00 annual donation); **Scuttlebutt from the Spermaceti Press** May 94 (Peter E. Blau, 3900 Tunlaw Road NW #119, Washington, DC 20007-4830, USA) (\*to which I'm indebted for some of the news above\*); **The New Baker Street Pillar Box** no. 18, and **The Franco-Midland Hardware Company Annual Report 1994: The Empty House Contract** (The Stock-broker's Clerk, 6 Bramham Moor, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants. PO14 3RU); **The Soft-Nosed Bullet-In** no. 15 and **The Striking (T)rifles** no. 21 (Von Herder Airguns Ltd, Michael Ross, Bendheide 65, 47906 Kempen 1, Germany); **The Serpentine Muse** vol. 12 no. 4 (The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes, Evelyn Herzog, 360 West 21st Street #5A, New York, NY 10011, USA); **The Petrel Flyer** vol. 6 no. 5 & no. 6 (The Stormy Petrels of B.C., Len Haffenden, 1026 West Keith Road, N. Vancouver, B.C. V7P 3C6, Canada).

